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ABSTRACT

This teaching module covers the Vietnam War, and consists of four lessons which can be used independently in interdisciplinary presentations or as a unit. The lessons are supported by documents that include accounts of refugees, parallel histories of the United States and Vietnam, a map, and newspaper clippings. Lesson 1 (supported by 10 documents) covers the "Consequences of War--the Refugees" and attempts to give students a sense of the plight and pain of war refugees. Lesson 2 (4 documents), entitled "Parallel Histories of the United States and Vietnam," explains the historical background of the conflict. Lesson 3 (3 documents), "Today: Vietnam and the United States," discusses Vietnam, its land and people, and both those in the United States who fought in the war and those who protested against it. Lesson 4 (2 documents), "Refugees 1988," is aimed at the growing problem of Southeast Asian refugees. (PPB)

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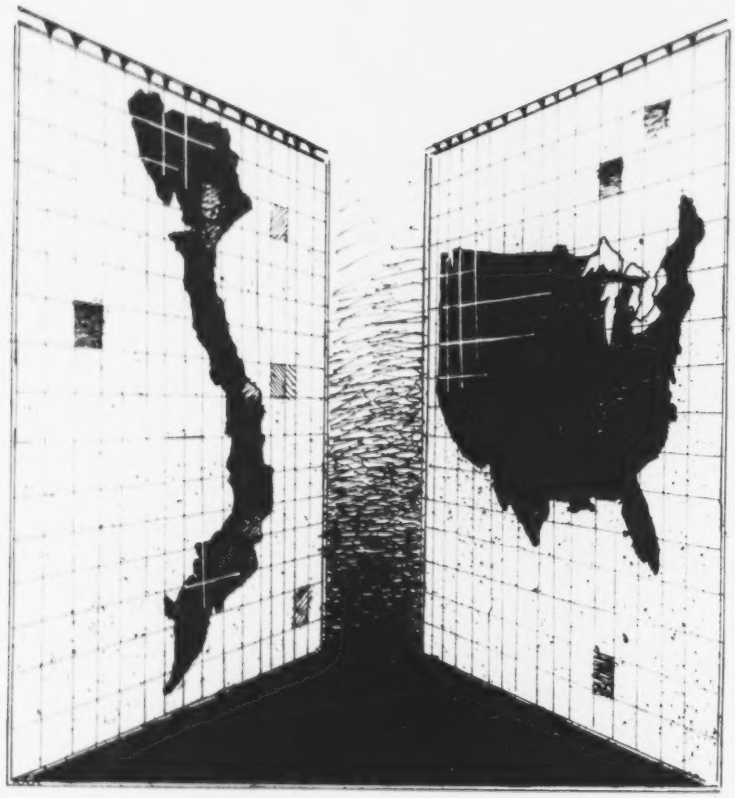
Parallel Histories: United States and Vietnam

Mary Eileen Sorenson

ED308123



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MODULE FOR EDUCATORS

GRADES 7-12

Parallel Histories: United States and Vietnam

By Mary Eileen Sorenson, Education Consultant,
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PARALLEL HISTORIES: UNITED STATES AND VIETNAM

The following are classroom materials that will help educators in teaching students to look at a historical event from several perspectives, to reflect on the context of each perspective, and to draw some conclusions in regard to the event itself.

This module's historical event is the Vietnam War. It is assumed that the students have available U.S. History textbooks where students can read about U.S. involvement in this war.

Each lesson can be used independently of each other. Lessons can be used in interdisciplinary presentations. Materials can be adapted for use in upper elementary and junior high.

The organization of the materials is as follows:

Lesson 1. Introduction: Consequences of War—the Refugees

A. Getting a Sense of the Pain
B. Listening to Those Who Know

pp. 1-4
Documents #1-10

Lesson 2. Parallel Histories of the United States and Vietnam

A. The "What" of the Conflict
B. The "Why" of the Conflict
C. Other Uses for the Parallel History Chart

pp. 5-10
Documents #11-13; 17

Lesson 3. Today: Vietnam and the United States

A. Vietnam - Its Land and People
B. U.S. Participants in the War

pp. 11-13
Documents #14-16

Lesson 4. Refugees 1988

A. UN High Commissioner for Refugees
B. Thailand: Southeast Asian Refugees - A 21st Century Problem?

p. 14-15
Documents #18-19

Lesson 1. Introduction: Consequences of War

A. "Getting a Sense of the Pain"

(Document #1) 1. Display:

Painting: "The Crossing" Richard Bosman
Collection Walker Art Center
Justin V. Smith Purchase Fund, 1984

No cropping, bleeding, alteration, overprinting

(Slide Purchase): Walker Art Center
Vineland Place
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403

(Document #2) Magazine Pictures: The Vangs, Permission of the
(Document #3) St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch

Grandfather Xiong
Permission of the National
Geographic Society

Posters: (Information Brochure)
United Nations High Commissioner for
Refugees
1718 Connecticut Avenue N.W.
2nd Floor
Washington, D.C. 20009, U.S.A.

Questions (notebook/discussion):

1. Describe what you see.
2. What might these people be feeling? thinking?
3. If you had a chance to speak to them what might you say?
4. What does the title of the painting mean to the picture?
5. Why are passages, journeys sometimes hard?
6. What is a refugee? an immigrant?

2. Display:

World Map or Refugee Map (a world map/wall chart giving statistical information on refugee situations world-wide.

(Information Brochure)
UN High Commissioner for Refugees
1718 Connecticut Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009, U.S.A.

Reading

(Document #4) Have students read selections from "Reactions of Lao/Cambodian students to their Experiences in the USA" (Minneapolis students)

Questions (notebook/discussion):

1. What new things did you learn from these accounts?
2. What stereotypes of Southeast Asians were evident?
3. How do you feel about what these young people are telling you about the United States?

3. Reading

(Document #5) Have students listen or read accounts from Southeast Asian students about the countries they left. (Check with ESL class)

Discussion:

What would you remember most of your home if you were forced to flee and settle in another part of the world?

4. Film:

Show film "Si Ce N'est Ici" (8 minutes - no dialogue, an animated film about a man forced to flee his country)

(Rental Information)
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
1718 Connecticut Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009, U.S.A.

5. Some suggested further activities:

1. Write a dialogue between the two men in the painting, Crossing.
2. Write and present a narration for the film.
3. Pretend you are the man in the plane. Keep a diary of your trip, writing of your feelings and thoughts.

(Document #6) 4. Read Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech. Sit down next to the boy in the poster and tell him of the speech and the man.

(Document #7) 5. Read Emma Lazarus' poem on the Statue of Liberty. Write a modern day version of it.

(Document #8) 6. Ask one other person to take the Rochester Southeast Asian American Survey. Talk with the person after he/she is done. Share what you have learned so far.

B. "Listening to Those Who Know" ...The Vietnam refugee

(Document #9) 1. Reading:

"The Day I Escaped" St. Paul 12 grade student

(Document #10) Reading:

Minnesota Social Studies teacher, Sister Andre Nilles, while visiting in Japan in 1985, spoke with a young Vietnamese refugee woman. Document #10 contains excerpts from a letter later written to Sister Andre in which the young woman shares some of her thoughts and feelings on the war. The young woman's name is Vu Kim Ian.

Group Activity:

Divide students into five groups. Have each group listen for information on one of these headings as they listen to the reading of documents 9 and 10:

WHO WHAT WHY WHERE HOW

After readings have each group record on newsprint what information they have.

Discussion:

What you have read, heard, seen about Vietnam:

1. What has happened that Quyen says, "Before 1975 we used to eat rice. After 1975 we had to mix rice with other grains and tubes grown underground."?

2. Explain how the "facts" on the newsprint connect with the feelings talked about while looking at the pictures of the Vangs, grandfather, and the feelings expressed in the school survey (e.g., Document #9 - "The first place that plane landed was San Francisco. On a terrible winter day we arrived in Minnesota"; Document #2 - the feelings expressed in face and gestures of Vangs in their first night here in Minnesota.)

3. Name the people mentioned by the refugee woman. What events? Describe some of her feelings about the War?

4. What questions do you have about what you heard?

5. What difficulties did you have in understanding what you heard?

2. Teacher Remarks:

In the spring of 1975, the same month that President Ford announced the beginning of our Bicentennial celebration, the last American troops and personnel fled Saigon in South Vietnam. President Ford mentioned that 200 years ago a small band of colonists, using guerilla tactics, successfully challenged the superpower of the day, England, at a bridge in Concord, Mass. President Ford did not mention that 200 years later another band of guerilla warriors defeated a super power. We will look at the what and the why of this very difficult and bitter experience for Vietnam and the United States.

Discussion:

1. Who composed the guerilla band in 1775? What kind of support did they receive from others living in the area?
2. What were the reasons these men and women fought a super power? What was the result of their struggle?
3. What did this war, our American Revolution, reveal about what we value in our society?
4. Who were the guerillas and who was the super power in 1975 in the Vietnam War? What values were we fighting for? How similar/different were these values from 1775?
5. What values were the guerillas of Vietnam fighting for? Did they have the support of all the people living there? What was the result of their struggle?

Reading:

Have students read account of period in textbook. (Resource): Wilson Quarterly, Summer (1983).

Lesson 2: Parallel Histories: The United States and Vietnam

A. The "What" of the Conflict

Brainstorm:

Before sharing chart ask students to indicate events they would put on the timeline-chart for both countries.

(Document #11) Display:

Parallel History Chart handed out or displayed. Suggested Activities:

1. Discussion:

   How long has the United States been "independent"? Vietnam?

   What was happening on the American continents when Vietnam declared its independence?

   When did Europeans colonize the American continents? Vietnam?

   How many times did Vietnam declare its independence?

   List the events you have heard of before.

   List the people, places mentioned on chart.

(Document #14) 2. Map Exercise: World Map and Vietnam Student Map

   Locate Vietnam on the world map. Locate Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Mekong River, Gulf of Tonkin, Dien Bien Phu.

   Name the countries that border Vietnam.

   Locate the areas mentioned on the chart.

   With yarn, string, connect Vietnam with Minnesota, tracing the passage of the Vang family, and other refugees.

   Locate Thailand.

3. Set up a reserve shelf and have students research topics from chart.

Resources:

1. Lessons of the Vietnam War
   Center for Social Studies Education
   Publishers Choice
   Mars Industrial Park
   P.O. Box 848
   Mars, PA 16046-0848

   The units in this series are readable and interesting. High school students should have little trouble with it. Also can be used in formal presentation of material. Excellently presented.

   Unit Topics:

   The units included in the curriculum are as follows:

   1. Teacher's Manual: Strategies and Resources for Teaching the Vietnam War
   2. Introduction to Vietnam: Land, Culture, and History
   3. America Goes to War: Decisions and Consequences
   4. Who Fought for the U.S.
   5. How the U.S. Fought the War: A Critical Evaluation
   6. Legal Issues Raised by the War
   7. When War Becomes a Crime: The Case of My Lai
   8. Taking Sides: The War at Home
   9. How the War Was Reported
   10. The Vietnam War in American Literature
   11. The Wounds of War and the Process of Healing
   12. The Vietnam War: Lessons from Yesterday for Today

2. "ABC's of the Vietnam War"
   Vietnam Curriculum Project
   Pilot Copy - Don Luce
   c/o M. E. Sorenson
   1377 Sumner
   St. Paul, MN 55116
   (Enclose $5 plus self-addressed 8x11 envelope for printing and mailing costs.)

   This is no longer in print. It gives a history of Vietnam from a perspective that is not the traditional Euro-American viewpoint. Has some clearly debatable and controversial points but has value in stimulating discussion and developing critical thinking.

3. School Library Resources: Written and A-V.

4. Vietnam, Stanley Karnow. Have students view certain sections of TV series, "Vietnam", and then read from this source on details and background.

5. Vietnam-A Teacher's Guide
Asia Society
725 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Excellent. Maps, timelines and questions, especially on U.S. involvement.

Oral Reports:

Use cooperative learning model, having students work in groups of four, each researching one topic and then organizing and presenting report to entire class.

1. Topics can be chosen within the same timeframe for each country. E.g., students research birth of Ho Chi Minh; while others research Spanish-American War. (See chart)

2. Topics can be organized around a theme, e.g., Vietnam independence struggle - 900 A.D., 1945, 1975 and U.S. independence struggle. (See chart)

3. Students should have events from both countries in final oral presentation and indicate place on chart that event occurred.

Follow-up:

When students seem to have grasped a basic understanding of what you feel is important in regard to significant people, events and dates, bring in a speaker or show a filmstrip on the war itself. The goal at this point is information. Speakers should be selected with this in mind.

Activity:

"Collecting History About the Vietnam War"
Interview friends and family and share results with class. Have students locate places mentioned on map and events and people on parallel history chart. Add these to their own copy of chart.

B. The "Why" of the Conflict.

Reading:

(Document #12) Hand out document sheet "Why the United States Became Involved in Vietnam"

Suggested Activities:

1. Locate on the parallel histories chart, the time periods in which each statement is being made. What is going on in each country? How might that influence the speaker?

2. Have students research the person quoted and events during the time.

   Report to class on findings.

   (Resource)
   The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints
   Greenhaven Press
   577 Shoreview Park Road
   St. Paul, MN 55126

3. Set up debates on (a) the 1954 arguments on involvement, (b) the 1965 arguments on involvement.

(Document #13) Reading: "Why the United States Failed"

Suggested Activities:

1. Have students research backgrounds of authors to share with class.

   (Resource)
   The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints

2. Have students write out in their own words, the argument used by each. Select students to read full argument in section in Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints books and report to class.

3. Panel presentation on the five arguments on failure. Have students working in five groups, each group responsible for one argument. Each group could choose spokesperson and the style of presentation.

4. Have speakers in who can help students better understand the why questions. Should include military, political, diplomatic, media, general public viewpoints.

Discussion:

1. How does the historical setting effect viewpoints of participants?
2. What role should the media, politicians, the general public, the military and allies play in foreign policy decisions?
3. In the 1950s, how would most citizens define patriotism? Did this change in the 1960s? What is patriotism?

(Document #17)

Reading: "The Vietnam Questions Live On"

Discussion:

1. Summarize the reasons given by the writer for the Communist success in Vietnam.
2. How similar or different are they from those studied in documents 12 and 13?

Film:

"Objective Chronology of America's Participation in Vietnam War" narrated by Bill Kurtis.
(Rental information): Encyclopedia Britanica - AV Catalogue

Discussion:

1. Why did we support the French in Vietnam?
2. Why did we "escalate" during the Kennedy presidency?
3. Why was the U.S. effort not sucessful?

Follow-up:

1. Have student write an essay on lessons learned from studying this war.

2. Choose one event, person, date on parallel history chart and write an essay relating it to the "whys" of the Vietnam War.

3. Have students make own chart adding information, details they have learned.

C. Other uses for the parallel history chart:

1. Foreign Policy decisions since 1938.
2. East/West Struggle of the Cold War in North/South hot wars.
3. Shrinking geo-political world: 51 UN members in 1945 increased to over 155 United Nations members today.

C. Other uses for the parallel history chart: (cont.)

4. Colonialism/Nationalism in Africa and Asia since WWII.
5. Superimpose the United States social revolutions of the sixties on the chart.
6. Teach Central America with a similar parallel chart.
7. Contact: Mary Eileen Sorenson
   1377 Sumner Street
   St. Paul, MN 55116
   (H) 612-698-7157

Lesson 3: Today—The Legacy

A. Vietnam - Its Land and People

View

(Document #14) Map of Vietnam today.

Have students identify places that they recognize from their study of the parallel histories chart and research. Add any other places that you determine are important to understanding area.

View

Show the film, River Journeys: Mekong, to class. Have students trace river journey as they watch film. After viewing film, what questions do students have regarding present day Southeast Asia.

River Journey: The Mekong, 55 minutes, color, JSA. William Shawcross travels up the Mekong River, from its delta to its source, and visits surrounding areas in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. (1985)

Cornell University
Media Services - Audio-Visual Resource Center
8 Research Park
Ithaca, NY 14850
607/255-2090

Further Activities:

1. Interview someone who has been to southeast Asia. Ask about climate, food, clothing, housing, plants, animals they observed. What impressed the person most about the area?
2. Plan a travelogue through southeast Asia. Advise the audience on vaccinations, clothes, routes, and cost.
3. Draw a wall size map to donate to class teacher for use when teaching this unit again.

Resource: "Lessons on Vietnam War" - Unit 2

(Document #15) Reading

Have students read excerpts from the poems, songs and folk tales of Vietnam.

Discussion:

What do these lines tell you about what is important to the Vietnamese? Choose one line that you especially liked and share with the class why.

(Document #16) Reading:

Have students read the selected quotes from participants in the war against the United States.

Discussion:

What is the reason these speakers give for their success against the United States? Do you agree? What does the statement "but I am also a Vietnamese" tell you about that person? Do you admire him for returning to Vietnam? What is different about these stories from the refugee stories in the beginning of the unit? Explain why these differences exist.

B. U.S. Participants in the War

"Listen to them Speak"

1. Have students choose from the wide selections of novels, personal accounts, movies, TV presentations and report to class after reading, viewing them.

2. Have students read selections from non-fiction books and present viewpoints, experiences of the political leader, military leader, media, citizen protestor and diplomat to class.

3. Have students interview community people, veterans, nurses, conscientious objectors as well as community organizations that were directly involved during this time.

4. Interview parents on memories, perceptions and share with class.

Attend a presentation on this theme:
"Litany" Dance presentation, Margie Fragnoli (U of M)
"Tracers" Theater, Penumbra Theater, St. Paul

Sample evaluating/sharing activity...Book Report

1. Put students in groups of five or six, each having read a different book.

2. Have other students listen and record one interesting point they learned from each student in circle. They will share this with students at end of discussion.

3. Each student giving book report will cover these questions while discussing with others in circle:

   (1) What background of author? What type of book?
   (2) Put the book in proper setting.

(3) What I learned about the Vietnam War? What of war in general?
(4) Share two quotes that are meaningful to you.
(5) What events were especially revealing or had a special impact on you? Describe them. Why do they have this special meaning?
(6) If you had a chance to talk to the author what questions would you ask? What comments?
(7) Are there any limitations when an eyewitness writes about these events? What value will your book have in the future when the history of this time is written?

"Present" what you have learned about Vietnam in any one of the visual, artistic, written or oral forms you chose.

Lesson 4: Refugees - 1988

(Document #18) Reading

Have students read "Letter from Thailand"

Discussion:

1. Compare/contrast to refugee stories in documents 9 and 10.

2. Have students list questions they have from Thailand story.

Activity:

Have students write for current information on Southeast Asian refugees in Thailand and report back to the class:

U.S. Committee for Refugees
815 15th Street N.W.
Suite #610
Washington, D.C. 20005
1-202-667-0782

Lawyers Committee for Human Rights
36 W. 44th Street
New York, NY 10036

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
1718 Connecticut Avenue N.W., #200
Washington, D.C. 20009

Laura Jordan Dietrich
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20005

United States Senators

Research:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - its history, purpose, achievements and current concerns.

(Document #19) Reading:

"Thailand says it will turn back "illegal refugees"

Discussion:

Have students locate places mentioned on map.

Have students summarize Thai viewpoint.

Have students discuss responsibility of U.S. and France in regard to these refugees.

Have students seek out connections between the Vietnam War and this story.

What could the role of the United Nations be in dealing with this problem?

Forty years ago, a decision was made by the world community that created a refugee "problem" in the Middle East. Today, the children of those refugees are battling for their own homeland. Will this be the same story in 40 years in Southeast Asia?

DOCUMENT #1

Richard Bosman, Crossing, 1984
oil on canvas
97 x 97 inches
Walker Art Center

DOCUMENT #1 (continued)

Background:

As the son of a Dutch sea captain, Richard Bosman was born in India and spent a turbulent childhood growing up in various places in the Middle East and eastern Asia. He went to art school in London and in the late 1960s came to the U.S. to study in New York.

Bosman has made many long ocean voyages and often uses these and sea themes in his work.

Style:

Bosman, along with other young painters of this decade, has been classified as a Neo-Expressionist. This group has rekindled interest in figurative art, as opposed to the non-objective styles that dominated the 1970s. These artists have a strong relationship to the early 20th century German Expressionists, in that both groups emphasize broad, direct painting styles and a tendency toward emotional tension in their work. In addition, because of his interest in storytelling, Bosman has reintroduced an element of narrative to contemporary art.

Bosman's work also has many relationships to Pop Art because of his interest in mass media--comic books, detective stories, pulp magazines, movies, and television news--as a source of imagery in his work.

Bosman's approach to materials is simple and direct. In his paintings, he squeezes the oil paint on to the canvas, spreading and mixing it directly on the surface. He also makes prints, preferring to work in woodcut, one of printmaking's oldest, most direct and technically simple mediums and the choice of several of the German Expressionists as well.

Subject Matter:

Most of Bosman's subjects are highly dramatic and filled with terror, action, and tension. His characters are set in life-and-death situations which are beyond their control. Bosman's paintings and prints have shown men falling overboard, shipwrecked survivors clinging to a capsized boat, and solitary figures escaping unknown disasters. In <u>The Crossing</u>, two young men cling to a flimsy vine in an attempt to cross a torrential flood or waterfall.

Bosman has appropriated these ideas from media sources, but he changes the story line, making it personal by drawing from his own experiences, dreams and nightmares.

Bosman's powerful imagery and frantic, thick brushstroke lead us to expect heavy emotionality, but this is not the case. The desperate situations seen in his paintings are contradicted by the deadpan, detached and ambivalent expressions on the faces of the people he paints. His characters seem to mirror the anxiety that prevails in our society and their benumbered response to a threatening environment is disturbingly familiar. Bosman's expressionless expressionism is exceedingly of its time.

Discussion questions for Passages:

What is happening in this painting? Will the characters survive their perilous passage? Why or why not?

Can you find things in this painting that don't seem to make sense? (the expressionless face, the awkward poses, the exaggerated setting...) Why do you think Bosman included such ambiguous details in this painting?

Do you think this scene is a real or ficticious one? Could it be symbolic of a real event? What kinds of situations could this scene suggest?

DOCUMENT #2

Scott Takushi/Staff Photographer

Bee Vang and his son Yee Leng, 2, look out on their new world from a window in their Frogtown apartment.

The Vang Family: A new beginning

27

By John Everingham
(c) National Geographic Society
May 1980 pp 652-3

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DOCUMENT #4

REACTIONS OF LAO/CAMBODIAN STUDENTS
(Minneapolis, 1983-84) TO THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE U.S.A.

WHAT DO YOU WANT AMERICANS TO KNOW AND UNDERSTAND ABOUT LAO/CAMBODIAN PEOPLE?

My teacher doesn't know that I am Lao. She thinks I'm Chinese or Cambodian. I want everyone to know that I'm Lao and nothing else.

I want Americans to know that it is hard to learn English.

I don't want Americans to call me "Chink," laugh at me or fight with me just because I'm small.

I want everyone to know what happened back in Laos (like the war).

Americans should learn that all people are different, not just Americans and Lao. It isn't bad to be different.

I don't want Americans to make fun of us.

I'd like Americans to learn some Lao. Then they'd know how hard it is to learn English. I'm not dumb but it is hard in English.

WHAT IS HARD FOR LAO/CAMBODIAN PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES

It's hard for my family to eat American food. I don't like it very much either. There's never any rice in our school lunches. I wish we could get rice at school.

You are afraid to walk anywhere. You could get lost and then you couldn't ask for help because you don't speak English.

It's very bad if you are sick and you need help in a hurry. The doctors don't understand so they send you home. I have a friend whose house burned up because the fireman didn't understand Lao.

It is hard on my parents when they think of our family that dies in Cambodia. My little brother and grandparents died. We are lonesome here.

DO YOU MISS YOUR COUNTRY?
DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT GOING BACK?

One day I will go back to my country. I loved Cambodia. It was fun there. When it got hot, we would all go to sleep. If it got very hot, we would tie our hammocks high up in the trees. It was wonderful up there. In the morning, my mother would give me two Cambodian pennies to buy candy on my way to school. I could go to my grandma's house when my parents were busy after school. Everything was so good for me before the war.

Yes, I miss my grandmother and my grandfather and all my friends too. We'd play together every day. I miss my water buffalo too. I'd ride on his back on the way to our rice fields.

In Laos, I had to leave my grandfather, because he was too old to come to America. I was so sad to leave Laos where we had many animals. I loved my house. I really miss my bike, my dog, pig and pet parrot. I would like to go back to find them some day.

Yes, I want to go back to Laos some day. I miss my old house. I don't know what happened to it. Maybe some other people live in it now. I miss my water buffalo, too, because I liked to ride on it. In the morning I would go to get my buffalo for rice farming. We were very happy until the war came and we had to go away from Laos.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO IN YOUR LIFE?

I want to know perfect English so I can get a good job. Then I will give donations to children just like rich people do in America.

I want to go to school so I can be a nurse or doctor. Then I can go to Thailand and help all the Lao people there. There were many sick people in Thailand.

When I grow up I want to work in a nursing home and help old people. I went to a nursing home with my church group. It was so sad to see so many old people all alone. In Laos the old people lived with their families and they were happy. My grandmother lives with us now. She is sick but we take care of her. I love her very much. I don't want her to go to a nursing home.

When I grow up I would like to be a teacher in Cambodia so I could teach Cambodian children how to read and write. The children would be happy.

DOCUMENT #5

Cambodia

When I was in Cambodia, I used to go fishing with my father. I will never forget one special time he came back home from work early. He ate lunch at 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Then he asked me if I wanted to go fishing, and I said yes. He took me to a large river. Then he asked me if I would like to have an orange for a snack. I said, "sure". He fished with a fishing pole and I fished with a stick and a rope. My father caught a large bull head that was 1 1/2 feet long and it weighed 5 pounds. I caught a bull head too, but it wasn't as big as my father's fish: mine was 10 inches long and it weighed 2 pounds. After fishing, I went back home with my father. My mother, brothers and sister had already prepared dinner for us. That was one of the best days in my life.

by Narin I

New Year in Laos

I remember New Years in my country back in Laos. During the Lao New Year celebration, we liked to race boats. The elephant is used for pulling and riding and also for carrying things. The bull is used for farming in the rice fields. The bull walks home on a dirt road and the men walk behind the bull. They carry water home and some of them are coming home from the boat race on New Year.

by Souraphanh

My House in Cambodia

In Cambodia my house was made out of leaves. I did not have a window in my house. We did have a tall house. We did not have a stove. We just made a fire and put the pan on top of the fire. We did not sleep on beds. We slept on the floor with a sheet and we did not have a bathroom. We just went out and dug a hole.

In America we have a big house with windows, beds, and a stove.

by Cheng Lor

Laos

In Laos we have coconut trees. Some people can't climb up the coconut trees. They use monkeys to get the coconuts. Then people buy coconuts. My house had a little coconut tree beside it. These trees had fruit called mangoes. We ate them like apples. When we walked on the streets, we saw big trees and little trees on the mountains. Some people lived in the mountains. They had fun there because they saw many beautiful trees and birds.

Minnesota is different from Laos but it is beautiful too. There are many apple trees in the country and apples taste good like mangoes. But Minnesota has many beautiful houses and many people like to live in houses. There is no snow or cold winters in Laos. When summer comes, it is too hot to work in summer school.

by Phalang

Boat Seller

In Laos some women sail on boats with food to sell. Many people come and buy the food that she sells. She goes through different parts of Laos by going up and down the river. When she stops, she takes her food out of the boat and puts a blanket on the ground and sells food for one day. Then the next day she takes her food to her boat and sails to the store to sell more food. When she stops, she gets her food on a car and drives to some store. When she gets to the store she takes a big blanket and puts it on the ground to sell to many people. After a while her food is all gone and her money was stacked in big piles and she got very rich.

by Nikham Vilaysouk

In Laos we have fruit trees and three wheel bikes. Also we have wild animals and many little bugs like grasshoppers, ants, beetles, and flies. Some fish have fine black eyes and long fins like wings. In Laos we had so many beautiful things. We made our house with hay and sticks. Some people made their house with rocks and bricks. My house was made of plastic paper and some little rocks. The flowers had beautiful colors like red, blue, purple and white. There were so many different kinds. When I came to America, I saw many pretty things I liked, but, at first, I was not happy at all. I was sad. When I went to school, I was happy. In school I saw many pencils and pens and white paper, chairs, decks and so many things to play with like soccer balls, kick ball and football. When my teacher took us to the zoo, I saw an animal like the animals in Laos too.

by Boutsady Phoulom

Laos

The kingdom of Laos is situated in Southeast Asia. China and Burma are to the north, Cambodia is to south, Vietnam is to the east and Thailand is to the west. The capitol of Laos is Vientiane. Laos is divided into sixteen provinces. The population is three million people who come from many ethnic groups. The biggest groups are Lao, Hmong, and Kha. Many countries are much smaller than the United States. The climate is very different from the United States too. It is always hot, and there are only two seasons, dry season, and

DOCUMENT #5 (continued)

rainy season. The streets are not as big as in the United States. Some of them can be used only in the dry season. We don't have big and tall buildings like in the United States. The food is different too. We usually eat rice, not bread like in the United States, and most of our food tasted spicy. My home town is Vientian, and it is about the size of Rochester, Minnesota. It is not as big as Minneapolis. I always think of my country but because of the communists that we don't like, we had to escape to live in the United States.

by Vongphet

DOCUMENT #6

Martin Luther King (1963): So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed ...that all men are created equal. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today. And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

So let freedom ring. From the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire, let freedom ring. From the mighty mountains of New York, let freedom ring. From the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania, let freedom ring. But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. And when this happens, when we let it ring, we will speed that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last, free at last,
Thank God Almighty, we're free at last.

DOCUMENT #7

Survivors - A Select Population

This reading is taken from The Gift of the Refugees written by a Minnesota family that worked in a refugee camp in Thailand.

The picture we get of refugees as a helpless mass of pitiful humanity can be quite misleading. There is much more than that to the refugees.

Most of them are refugees by choice. They have deliberately chosen to flee rather than submit to some unacceptable affront. In the case of the Hmong tribe - under systematic annihilation by the Communists in Laos—it isn't much of a choice. In the case of the lowland Lao, there are more options.

Of those who make the choice to flee, only a fraction arrive in a refugee camp. Some will have their plans discovered. Some will be caught as they leave. Some will die en route of disease or hunger, especially among the Hmong, where the secret flight through mountain jungles can take months. Some will drown in the Mekong, from exhaustion or bullet wounds. Some will find the boat they hired was run by bandits or Communist agents. Some will be raped on arrival. Some will make it, weakened, to the detention center only to die there from the overwhelming exposure to infectious disease.

A fresh volunteer, standing in the hospital ward of a refugee camp, may at first see only helpless, pitiful people. With time, he learns that he is in the presense of one of the most rigorously selected populations on earth. It is first self-selected. It is then further selected by a ruthless environment. The survivors of this process tend to be an incredibly resourceful group of human beings.

Volunteers at Nongkhai could only stand in awe at the reaction of the refugees on the night of February 15, 1980, when a fire swept through the camp in forty-five minutes, leveling the straw and bamboo homes of 20,000 people. By our standards, such a tragedy should have yielded a high incidence of injury, shock, and general inability to cope. Here there was one death, a few hundred minor burns, and one case of hyperventilation attributed to stress. There was almost no panic or looting. By next morning, the refugees were bending gracefully over the warm ashes, scraping for valuables and for bits of wire and nails to use in improvising new shelters.

In part, this response could be attributed to the Lao culture - the Asian admiration for the bamboo stalk that bends with the wind. Primarily, though, it was an expression of the pervasive coping ability of refugees.

The refugees don't flaunt these qualities. They seem delighted, when there is an opportunity, to luxuriate in a dependency role. They face the same culture gap that we do. They, too, can see themselves as pitiful and helpless in comparison to the rich, omnipotent Westerners.

But, behind those wretched facades are the real refugees, and they tend to be splendid human beings.

DOCUMENT #7 (continued)

At Nongkhai the air is alive with a sense of change. Few of these refugees expect to spend the rest of their lives in the camp. And, whatever the change brings, it is almost certain to be better than the present. So they tend to be basically optimistic about the future. Despite their appalling circumstances, they seem to have a gleam in their eyes.

Refugees, worldwide, have been described as a self-selection of the most venturesome, rebellious, energetic, aggressive, and sometimes quarrelsome members of their societies. Some of them had no choice but to flee. Those who were the elite in their former societies might have exaggerated expectations in their new world. But the majority are surprisingly adaptable, work hard at jobs that no one else will take, and rise rapidly.

Throughout history, refugees have suffered, and some have survived. They always looked pitiful and helpless. No one expected much from them. But they had the gleam in their eyes. And they invigorated every society they touched. For the Statue of Liberty, Emma Lazarus wrote:

> Give me your tired, your poor,
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

Thought Question: Answer these questions in your notebook.

1. The authors refer to the refugees as a "self-selected" population. What does that mean?

2. How do the refugees resemble the "bamboo stalk that bends with the wind"?

3. Why would the refugees have a "gleam" in their eyes at the refugee camp?

DOCUMENT #8

Southeast Asian Americans

You may or may not know a great deal about the Southeast Asians who have come to live in Rochester. Answer the questions with your best hunch. You will have a chance to talk about these answers and to take the test again after you study about the experiences of these new Americans.

*****

True False 1. All of the Southeast Asians have fled from the same country.

True False 2. Southeast Asia is close to mainland China.

True False 3. The climate of Southeast Asia is much like it is in Minnesota.

True False 4. The Southeast Asians coming here speak the same language.

True False 5. These people were eager to leave their homelands.

True False 6. These people have been called "Boats" because most of them lived on houseboats along the river and sea coast of Vietnam.

True False 7. All of the peoples of Southeast Asia have been united in their long war against outside control by the U.S.

True False 8. A refugee is someone fleeing from danger--someone seeking a peaceful home that is safe.

True False 9. Most Southeast Asian families who come here tend to have strong family ties.

True False 10. Refugees can only come into America if they are sponsored by a church, another organization, or an individual.

True False 11. Because of their attitudes toward education, most young Southeast Asians do very well in American schools, working hard and learning quickly.

True False 12. Many Southeast Asians fleeing their homelands have looked to the U.S. for help because they helped our military forces during the Vietnam war.

True False 13. Some Southeast Asians eat stray dogs.

True False 14. At the present time the U.S. government pays for the housing, food, and medical needs of these newcomers from Southeast Asia for up to three years.

DOCUMENT #8 (continued)

True False 15. Many Southeast Asians arrive here in debt because they have had to borrow funds to pay for their air transportation.

True False 16. Several refugee families may go together and buy an automobile which they share.

True False 17. The average length of time a refugee family waits in a refugee camp is about two months.

True False 18. As a sign of respect, many Southeast Asian students avoid looking directly at their teachers when spoken to.

True False 19. Most Southeast Asian immigrant families in Rochester are eager to drop their old ways of living and acting and to become like everyone else.

True False 20. These newcomers seldom miss their homelands.

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DOCUMENT #9

The Day I Escaped -

The following was written by a senior at Cretin High School in St. Paul - 1987

My name is Quyen Nguyen. I was born in Vietnam. I come from a big family. Pnan Tnuet is the name of the town where my family lived. The town was small and it was located in the south of Vietnam. In this town the community was tied closely together. The town was mostly Catholic people. The Church was usually the center of our community. The town was located near the ocean. The town was quiet but it was a beautiful place. Even though I myself was taken away from this town, I will always keep it in my heart.

My parents were shopkeepers. In Vietnam the parents usually worked and they would take care of the whole family. When boys would marry their wives would come to the home too. As parents got older, the oldest son or daughter in the family had to provide for the needs of the family. My family had a life of freedom when the south and the north were separated. After the Communists from the north took over the country, we really had a terrible life. Before 1975 we used to eat rice. After 1975 we had to mix rice with other grains and a tube grown underground. If you wanted to eat better, you had to buy on the black market. That meant you had to pay much higher prices. The Communist government kept everyone poor by changing the money system. A family had to turn in its money and would get only a small amount of the new money. It did no good to keep the old money because it could not be used any longer. This was done two or three times. I point this out for you to help you understand what life in Vietnam was like.

My parents felt real bad about life under the Communists. In 1979 my parents decided to make arrangements for seven of their children to get out of the country without the Communists knowing we were leaving. My father had become a fisherman after 1975 and had bought a boat with two partners. He also knew other men with boats and arranged for a boat to pick us up. But the boat did not come to the spot that we expected it to come. I remember that night very well. The whole town become crowded because people heard a boat was leaving the country. Many people wanted to leave the country if they had a chance. The Communist police knew something was happening because of the crowds and it ended with a lot of shooting. I was lucky that I did not get killed that night. I still am frightened when I think about it. I was in the water with the tide coming in so that I didn't know how deep it was. Just imagine that you don't know how to swim and suddenly bullets fly over the top of your head. But finally I got out of that terrible scene and back on the shore. The boat was very, very crowded with people packed on every place they could be. The only one of us who got on the boat was my seven year old brother who was with a friend of my father. He ended up in Australia and none of us had seen him since that day. Then our family had to go back to our own house.

Two or three days later we tried to escape a second time. This time only my father, three brothers and I escaped. The Communists had many heavy patrols in our town after the first boat left Vietnam. We escaped on my father's own fishing boat. We left around 7:30 p.m. at night to go fishing. The town was quiet except for the cries from a child and a dog's barking in the distance.

The night came. A chilly wind blew from the ocean. Our boat slowly moved toward the police station. There they would make a decision whether to let the Communists find out about us. A patrol came to our boat and checked, but we were lucky that they did not see that we had more people on the boat than they expected. The police also checked to see that the boat did not carry a large amount of fuel. Anyway we were safe from the station. Now our boat slowly moved out into the ocean. Our boat carried seventeen people including me. We were on the boat about five days. Even though the boat was big enough for us, we were short of gasoline, water and supplies. We suffered from storms. We were lucky that we had a little compass to show us the right direction. In the boat we always prayed to God to bring us out of this terrible situation. Finally after five days we reached one of the Indonesia Islands on which there was a refugee camp.

On the island we really had difficult times. In the beginning the camp government did not give us food enough. We had to sell some of our valuables to buy more food. We used straw and forest trees to build our house. At night we could hear a lot of noise from rats. It wasn't a good place.

After a couple of months went by, one night my father died. We felt really sad. It was like thunder struck our minds. Why did he leave us without saying good bye? I remembered my mother the night we escaped. She sat in a dark corner of the house with tears coming down from her eyes.

We stayed on that island about nine months. Then we moved to another island. From there we waited to go to the United States. The life on this island was better than before. Then we were moved to Singapore. We stayed one night. Then we flew on a 747 to the United States. The first place that plane landed in the United States was San Francisco. On a terrible winter day we arrived in Minnesota. We were sponsored by an American family. They treated us the same way as they treated their children. They look after us the same way our parents would.

My older sister and a younger brother escaped from Vietnam after we did. They now live in France. Sometimes we get a letter from my mother. Things are getting worse in Vietnam. Some day I hope everything turns out alright and that I can go back to see my beloved mother.

DOCUMENT #10

1. My name, my family, my home, what life was like for me before the North Vietnamese came

1. My name is Vu thi Kim Lan "Thi" is a special name used for girls, it means female I am a seventh girl of nine My father was in high position of South Vietnam government During 1945 - 1972, he had many jobs (Vietnamese and French teacher, district chief, director of Broadcasting station etc, but the last job was a secretary of Mr NGUYEN VAN AN who was special secretary of President NGUYEN VAN THIEU

-Because of my father's high position, we belonged to middle class or upper class (as far as I am concerned) in South Vietnam society before 1975 we had a wonderful time in a lucky and good life. Sometime we had worried about the North-South Vietnamese War but we never worried about anything else (economical, political problems etc)

After coming to Japan, I have read some books which talked about Vietnam War, and I feel terribly sorry for the war-victims and my country's situation Meanwhile, I terribly feel ashamed of myself because my family had lived selfishly when others went to death everyday on the Vietnam battle fields.

5. How I feel about America's Role in the war

American is the people has a good ideal of freedom, and is the vanguard people who keeps freedom for the world, contrary to the International Communist Soviet. I respect American this point and I want to thank all of you, especially Americans soldiers in Vietnam war. I am sure all Vietnamese will remember all of thing you died for us now and the past. But I really do not agree with the policy of American Government during 1955 - 1975.

(You remember our discussion in the first meet, we talked about the Role of American in Vietnam war and NGO DINH DIEM's regime.) Afterward, I had looked up in a lot of books, documentaries, films which talked about American policy and Diem's policy at that time. I found no evidence to blame him as a dictator ruler as American newspaper had talked before and after his death. He was killed because to American, he was so obstinate to accept J. F. Kenedy's policy: let American soldiers enter in Vietnam and fight Viet-cong directly.

President Diem wanted to get America's support, foods,

weapons, medicine and Political Counsellor, especially Military counsellor, however he did not accept American Soldiers gives into South Vietnam. why

That the main reason he was killed by CIA, and of course other reasons made him was beheaded such as: Buddhist movement and Viet Cong: (North Communist) interfered in the monopolization South Vietnam.

To us, President Diem was a enthusiatic patriot but to North Vietnam he was a thorn which must be taken out. At that time, If America's Government and South Vietnamese knew after coup d'etait 11/63 (P. Diem was beheaded). North Vietnam held a celebration for 3 days to enjoy this new, I am sure they would not kill him.

After his death, South Vietnam fell into terrible civil war because there was no president. Embracing this chance, Viet Cong entered in South Vietnam, mainly in Saigon, connected with their old Comrades, built a basic control and carried their conspiracy to monopolize South Vietnam's economical, political and military by various ways: disturbed, sabotaged, induced workers go on strike etc.

As far as I am concerned, this basic wrong caused by America's policy.

In my opinion, American could help us by providing foods, weapons, Military councellor etc but they should not go direct into the interior political of South Vietnam. Also, America's Government should respect South Vietnam's Sovereignty. They should not take a hand in killing P. NGO DINH DIEM, they should not interfer in P. Nguyen Van Thieu's doing. But they did, and they controled almost organization of South Vietnam Government. This is the reason why North Vietnam could say South Vietnam was a "new colony" of America and hid their invading intrigue by the label "liberate South Vietnam from the pressure of Empire America" or "Going to unify Vietnam without the control of America" etc.

DOCUMENT #10 (continued)

According to their hipocritical labels, "North Vietnam were supported by public opinion and "false peace group" such as a prostitute like Jane Fonda (I call her a prostitute thought I know she is a singer)

C. Why the Communist won.

I Political problems

A Dosmestic

a Vietnamese ourshelves, peoples who know well the Communist were very few Except 2 millions refugees from the North, and some peoples who fight directly to Viet Cong (soldiess, politician, etc...), almost of South Vietnamese knows nothing. And these ones wandered why North and South are exactly the same country, same language were their enemy They were also tired from the long war from 1954 till 1975, they wanted to have peace, even the worse peace. And they innocently think. North are Communist but they are Vietnamese, therefore they might not treat them badly or makes them hurt

(These ones are terribly sorry for their misunderstood, now)

. The propaganda of Viet Cong was so skillful, they answered exactly the desire of South Vietnamese" Peace, Democracy, freedom etc" and as I said before, sophisticalky they urged South Vietnamese stand up against the Government, used anti-war songs, anti-war postures to make paralysed the fighting spirit of South Vietnamese Army etc

o Most South-Vietnamere people (include my family) lived selfishly, they entrusted the "Anti-Communist" affair for the soldiers and helped them nothing They also did not helps the Government in "Anti-Communist" affair (of course some people did but very few, I suppose)

o South-Vietnam government, I mean the leaders were the bad kind of people. They did not fight bravely to the Commu-

DOCUMENT #10 (continued)

nist but fought to get high position, carried money on the miserable condition of general people. Bribe even president, because of money some guys like: DANG VAN QUANG did spy for North Communist etc...

B. Abroad

- In America, demonstration, "Anti-War" movement, and public opinions did not like Vietnam War (Vietnam War went into songs, to pub....) They wonder "what were A.Soldiers fighting for". Etc.

- In other country "Anti-Vietnam war" movement spread larger, those people did not know the real meaning of South - North Vietnam War, they just thought North wanted to liberate Vietnam from America's control (I suppose some ones did know the truth but they kept silent or they were deceived by North communist propaganda) Those people did not know "What is the Communist"

II Military Problems

America gave S.Vietnam up, they would not support us anything after 1973, American soldiers left S.Vietnam and S.Vietnam only waiting for the death till 1975.

III International Problems

After shaking hand with Red China, America's Government recognize no necessary to hold S.Vietnam like before. They helped us because they wanted to prevent communist power come whole South-East Asian but they could take a good connection with Red China already so, they would give S.Vietnam up.

DOCUMENT #10 (continued)

7. My opinion about the way the Communist are running the country now:

Before 1975, S Vietnam was poor country but it was not corrupt like now. We Vietnamese endured the war for 30 years long but nobody got out of country by boat or by anything else. Now, we have Peace (?) but more or less 1 millions got out of their own country even they know their trip is very dangerous. Vietnam, now, is a enormous prison, is a hell on the earth.

As I wrote before, with the way the Communist are running Vietnam now, it will lead Vietnam goes back to ancient time without happiness. People work like cow, like buffalo, like a dog. Sick, no medicine, hungry, no food, thirsty, drink their own tears. If they blame, go into jail, if they cry, they will be beat, will be tortured. All Vietnamese, now, live as a machine which only to work for party, for War, for Soviet not live for themselves. "Male is a worker, Female is a "birth-machine" is one of many slogans of Party.

I think, if the World still close their eyes and believe in "Communist's Word" (I mean any kind of Communist), they will be sorry like Vietnamese now. I hope the World will waker up as soon as they can, co-operate in order "wipe out the Communist and Communism" of the earth to live in real Peace and Freedom.

If has Communist, you have to fight. That is the thing I learn after 7 years lived in S. Vietnam.

DOCUMENT #11
Parallel Histories Chart

Vietnam		United States
	8000 BC	"Mississippi settlements" in today's Minnesota
Austro-Asian Migrations	2000 BC	
Viets in Red River Valley	400 BC	
Kingdom of NAM VIET	207 BC	
China controls NAM VIET	111 BC	
	900 AD	Mayan civilization
Nam Viet Independence	939 AD	
	1200 AD	Aztec Civilization
Viets conquer Champa	1471 AD	
	1492 AD	Europeans "discover" American continents
	1570 AD	Irroquois League formed
	1600 AD	Europeans colonize the Americas
French missionaries arrive	1620 AD	
	1700 AD	Independence movements in North America
	1776 AD	Independence declared; country named The United States
	1800 AD	Independence movements in South America
Nguyen dynasty names land, Vietnam	1804 AD	
	1850 AD	Continental expansion

DOCUMENT #11 (continued)

French military expedition arrives	1858 AD	
	1865	United States' Civil War
French Protectorate Treaty	1885	
Birth of Ho Chi Minh	1890	
	1898	U.S. War with Spain in Pacific and Carribean
Revolts against French	1908	
	1917	United States enters WWI
	1919	"Red Scare" in USA
Indo-Chinese Communist Party founded	1930	
	1938	"Peace in our time" Munich
Japan lands in Vietnam	1940	
Viet Minh League founded	1941	U.S. enters WWII...Pearl Harbor
Vietnam declared independence	1945	Atomic bombs dropped in Japan
French create government of South Vietnam	1946	
Beginning of Franco/Vietminh War		
	1949	Department of State "white paper" on China
	1950	U.S. and UN troops to Korea

DOCUMENT #11 (continued)

	1952	"Red Scare" in United States
		President Eisenhower elected
Battle of Dien Bien Phu	1954	U.S. attends Geneva conference
End of Franco/Vietminh War		
Geneva Agreements		
Beginning of American/Viet Cong (NLF) War	1955	Military aid and advisors sent to President Diem
Diem becomes President of South Vietnam	1956	
National Liberation Front founded by Ho Chi Minh	1960	President Kennedy elected
	1961	Bay of Pigs
	1962	Cuban Missile Crisis
President Diem assassinated	1963	President Kennedy assassinated
		President Johnson assumes office
Hostile fire in Tonkin Bay	1964	Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
North Vietnam bombed	1965	
	1966	Anti-war demonstration
		400,000 troops in Vietnam
TET offensive in cities	1968	Nixon elected President
President Thieu comes to power		540,000 American troops in Vietnam

DOCUMENT #11 (continued)

		Paris Peace talks begin
	1969	Secret bombing of Cambodia
	1970	U.S. invasion of Cambodia
Ho Chi Minh dies	1971	
Paris Peace Agreement signed	1973	Paris Peace Agreement signed
		American troops leave Vietnam
		War Powers Act passed by Congress
		Nixon resigns
End of American/Viet Cong War	1975	Last Americans leave Saigon
Saigon renamed Ho Chi Minh City		
	1976	President Carter elected
	1977	Vietnamese boat people arrive
Vietnam invades Cambodia and sets up a Vietnamese controlled government there.	1978	
	1982	Vietnam War Memorial dedicated in Washington, D.C.

DOCUMENT #12

"WHY THE UNITED STATES BECAME INVOLVED"

1. "Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Communist ally in China, by whatever means, would be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively accepted, but should be met by united actions." John Foster Dulles, 1954

2. "I am frankly of the belief that no amount of American military assistance in Indochina can conquer an enemy which is everywhere and at the same time nowhere, an enemy of the people which has the sympathy and covert support of the people." John F. Kennedy, 1954

3. "The defense of the free world rests on a very delicate balance. The key elements in that balance are American power and American determination. If we lack the power to maintain that balance, then certainly all is lost. If we reveal that we lack the determination, if we, for instance, allow ourselves to be pushed out of Viet-Nam, such a humiliation may indeed be the second shot heard around the world; and a dozen nations might soon throw in the sponge and make whatever accommodation they could with an enemy." Thomas Dodd, 1964

4. "The point of no return is rapidly being approached in Viet-Nam. The Marines have landed. Our planes and our men are engaged in almost daily bombing of a foreign land and people. The sending in of ground forces in division strength is hinted at by the army chief of staff. The committing of as many as 250,000 American troops is in the short range contingency planning. The prospects of thousands of American men laying down their lives in a war on the Asiatic continent looms larger with everyday that passes. Why? Every time President Johnson is asked this question... the first reason he gives is always the same: We must do what we are doing to honor the commitments we have made to the Vietnamese people ever since 1954." Don R. Larson and Arthur Larson, 1965

Quotes taken from The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints
David L. Bender
Greenhaven Press
577 Shoreview Park Road
St. Paul, MN 55126

Classroom sets of this text are excellent for the suggested debates.

DOCUMENT #13

"WHY THE UNITED STATES FAILED IN VIETNAM"

1. "One of the continuing arguments of the Vietnam War is whether or not a formal declaration of war would have made any difference. On the one hand there are those who see the declaration of war as a kind of magic talisman that would have eliminated all of our difficulties. On the other hand there are those who see a declaration of war as a clear statement of INITIAL public support which focuses the nation's attention on the enemy...it was the lack of such focus on the enemy and on the political objectives to be obtained by the use of military force that was the crux of our strategic failure." Colonel Harry G. Summers

2. If the United States had not invested the situation in Vietnam with rivalry with Communist powers, the tragedy might have been avoided. If it had perceived the conflict as a civil war, it would have had no good reason to become involved. If it had seen the situation simply as a clash between colonialists and nationalists, it might not have entered military engagement." Walter Capps

3. "The decision makers made one crucial mistake: As Secretary of State Dean Rusk observed in 1971, they "underestimated the resistence and the determination of the North Vietnamese."...The willingness of the Communists to accept punishment in Vietnam was virtually unprecedented in the history of modern warfare." John Mueller

4. "In short, the Vietnam conflict was waged in an environment too complex and mysterious for Americans to comprehend." Stanley Karnow

5. "For the first time in modern history, the outcome of a war was determined not on the battlefield but on the printed page." Robert Elegant

6. "At the center...was the failure to decide clearly whether the problem was primarily an internal insurgency or an aggression." Norman Hannah

Quotes taken from: The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints
David L. Bender
Greenhaven Press

Classroom sets of this text are excellent for the suggested debate.

DOCUMENT #14

Al Cardwell, © Coast to Coast Books

Resource: Vietnam
Asia Society
Fall, 1983

DOCUMENT #15

THE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM

Poems, Songs and Folk Tales:

1. I pray to the sky, land and clouds
   To wind and rain I pray both day and night
   I pray my legs be hard and stones be soft
   That sky be clear, that sea be calm
   Then only then, my heart will be at peace.
   (Old folk poem)

2. A thousand years
   of Chinese reign
   A hundred years
   of French domain
   Twenty years
   of civil war
   A sad Viet Nam
   is a mother's fate
   A sad Viet Nam
   is a mother's fate.
   (Popular 20th century song)

3. And when the war is over
   All will be as it was
   Travelers will pass through
   with pity in their hearts
   To grow old on battlefields
   is a man's destiny
   (Doan Thi Diem, woman poet, 18th century)

4. A hundred years-in this life span on earth
   talent and destiny are apt to feud.
   You must go through a play of ebb and flow
   and watch those things as make you sick at heart.
   Is it so strange that losses balance gains?
   Blue heaven's wont to strike a rose from spite.
   (The Tale of Kieu, Epic poem of Vietnam, 19th century)

Source: Lessons on the Vietnam War - Unit 2
Center for Social Studies Education
Publishers Choice
Mars Industrial Park
P.O. Box 848
Mars, PA 16046-0848

DOCUMENT #16

"WHY THE VIETNAMESE WON"

"Looking Back at the War" All the following excerpts are direct quotes from "Road to Hill 10" by William Broyles, Atlantic Monthly, April 1985.

1. "I have seen all the West has to offer. All the material progress, all the consumer goods, the way of life. But my heart is in my village and my country. I would never think of being somewhere else. My father now keeps the family altar. When he dies, as the family's eldest son I will keep it. I will light the candles, I will observe the feast days. I am a Communist but I am also Vietnamese." Nguyen Van Thuan
   Regular Soldier

2. "Of course we had many losses, suffered many defeats. But we never stopped winning the war. Time was on our side. We did not have to defeat you militarily; we had only to avoid losing. A victory by your brave soldiers meant nothing, did nothing to change the balance of forces or to bring you any closer to victory. That was because the people, the Viet Cong, and our regular forces were inseparable. If you had a temporary success against one, the other would take up the battle."
   General Nguyen Xuan Hoang
   Army Historian

3. "You know, your mistake was not in your tactics or even your strategy. You simply should not have gotten into this war in the first place. It is far easier to start a war than to end one--that is a valuable lesson."
   General Nguyen Xuan Hoang
   Army Historian

4. "One weak point was your rotation of soldiers. You were strangers here anyway. And as soon as someone began to learn the country you sent him home. Your second weak point was to try to win the hearts and minds of the people while you were using bombs to kill them. And finally, you had a very bad ally: ninety percent of the puppet army were corrupt, and the ten percent that were good soliders were not enough.
   Bui Tin
   Regular Army

5. "Vietnam is a society accustomed to sacrifice on the verge of having sacrificed enough. To ease those sacrifices the country must grow economically, but that means opening the door to all the Western social effects... On several occasions I heard people mutter, "Did we fight the war for this?" Until the leadership can answer the question of what comes after independence and freedom, until they can truly convert their warrior culture to peace, their victory will remain bittersweet."
   William Broyles
   U.S. Marine Vietnam Veteran

DOCUMENT #17

The Vietnam questions live on

By William Pfaff
Los Angeles Times Syndicate

Paris
The old, depressing arguments about Vietnam go on because the questions about Vietnam are urgently present today in the Middle and Near East, in the Philippines, the Gulf, and Central and South America.

A basic question: Was the United States responsible for the fall of South Vietnam to communism? Responsible because it could have prevented that outcome and failed to do so? Some say yes. If the answer is yes, and the United States possessed the power to "save" or to "lose" Vietnam, it follows that it has the power to save or lose other countries elsewhere today. If the answer is no, a fundamentally different view must be taken of American power and responsibility — past, but also present.

At a debate in Paris this month, some Vietnamese survivors of the collapse of the Saigon government accused the Nixon administration of consciously abandoning them by signing a peace accord with North Vietnam in January 1973 and withdrawing U.S. forces. They say Vietnam was betrayed by the United States.

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who was present, replied that he had signed the peace agreement in good faith, believing that this "would rally a consensus in Congress" so that if Hanoi violated the agreement, there would be public support for resumed bombings. Because of the Watergate scandal, he said, when the crisis came, renewed bombing had been made politically impossible.

This is arguable so far as U.S. public opinion was concerned. Behind it, however, is a disingenuous assumption about the situation in Vietnam. Why should resumed bombing have stopped a new Communist offensive? A long campaign of bombings in the past — bombings heavier than against Germany during World War II — had not deterred or defeated the Communists. Nor had a decade-long intervention by a half million American soldiers. Why should measures that had failed in the past work in the future?

The peace treaty and "Vietnamization" of the war were acts of great-power cynicism. This, surely, was clear at the time. The Nixon administration had discovered that it could not win the war, or that it could not do so at a cost acceptable to the American public. The president, and his secretary of state, both of them intelligent men and political survivors, drew the inevitable conclusion and acted on it.

They were not, I think, wrong to do so. They were wrong not to have done so long before 1973. Their decisions sealed the fate of South Vietnam. But how is it that South Vietnam's fate could be settled in this way? Why was the government in Saigon fatally dependent on the United States? With such a dependence, what real claim to legitimacy could it make? These are essential issues.

What happened to Vietnam followed from the historical fact that the Communist movement, which took root in the country in the 1920s and 1930s, emerged by the 1940s as the single most dynamic and competent native political force in the country. It captured the leadership of the nationalist and anticolonial forces of the time and imaginatively exploited the opportunity provided by Japan's explosive ejection of European colonial power from the greater part of Asia in 1941-1943.

When France attempted to reestablish itself in Vietnam after the war, the Communists were able to dominate the struggle against France. This was not inevitable; there were other nationalist forces in the country. In India, Indonesia and Burma at the same time, the nationalist movements were non-Communist. It simply happened otherwise in Vietnam.

It is a fact of history that the Communists made themselves the most formidable political force in Vietnamese society, and from the 1940s to the 1970s were able to motivate and sustain an intense popular struggle against two foreign great powers, France and then the United States, as well as against their domestic rivals.

The failure of Vietnam's non-Communists may be explained in terms of particular events or personalities, of who was where at a particular time, or by the peculiarities of Vietnamese political and social structure at the time, the superior organizational techniques of the Communists, or the fatal compromise the non-Communists made in taking foreign support. It is a fact that the anti-Communist Vietnamese failed despite vastly greater economic and military assistance, first from France and then from the United States, than the Viet Minh and its successor, the Viet Cong, ever received from their allies in China and the Soviet Union.

There is no satisfactory single explanation for what happened. It is a matter now for historical investigation and reflection. In the end, however, what happened was the Vietnamese affair and the Vietnamese responsibility. This is something Americans failed to understand at the time, and it is something which some Americans, and some Vietnamese, refuse to acknowledge today.

It is time to examine what happened in Vietnam with the dispassion appropriate to an event that was a political tragedy for Vietnam, and for Cambodia and Laos as well. It was a tragedy for the United States too. Its problems are still with us, and we might learn something from the past. The wind of revolution that swept across Vietnam blows elsewhere today, across the Muslim world, in the Pacific, in the Americas.

Minneapolis Star and Tribune
December 28, 1987

DOCUMENT #18

Letter from Thailand raises refugee hopes

By Wendy S. Tai
Staff Writer

When Lang Hong saw the letter from the U.S. Embassy in Thailand last week, she said she knew it must be good news.

It was. It told the 22-year-old Bloomington woman that two sisters whom she hasn't seen in 12 years could be interviewed for resettlement in the United States in the coming weeks.

"I've waited so long," she said. "The last 12 years seem a century ago . . . I want to get my family back."

Last month the Thai government tentatively agreed to allow the United States to begin the process of bringing to this country perhaps as many as 4,500 Cambodians, refugee advocates say.

The State Department declined to confirm the tentative agreements Monday. "We're working on these problems, and we're very hopeful that there's some kind of resolution soon," department spokeswoman Sheppie Abramowitz said.

The number of Cambodian refugees that would be interviewed would be a fraction of the nearly 300,000 left in camps along the Thailand-Cambodia border. "We judge progress in this area by little steps," said Jim Towey, legislative director for Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Ore.

Towey specializes in refugee affairs for Hatfield, who sponsored a nonbinding resolution approved last month pledging the United States to admit 28,000 Southeast Asian refugees for each of the next three years.

The latest development would allow U.S. officials to begin interviewing refugees in border camps and in Khao I Dang camp, which is about 10 miles northwest of the border.

Affected would be refugees who are immediate family members of U.S. citizens and close relatives of U.S. permanent residents, as well as those who arrived at Khao I Dang during 1984 to 1985 and have some connection to the United States.

The Thai Embassy in Washington, D.C., confirmed yesterday that only 1,013 refugees would be affected by the agreement. Interviews for resettlement have begun, said Parichat L. Phantha, embassy spokeswoman on refugee affairs.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees, an advocacy group in Washington, D.C., estimated that another 3,500 would be interviewed.

But interviews are only the first hurdle. If approved, refugees then would have to wait to be transferred to a transit center southeast of Bangkok. The wait could take six to 12 months, said Glenda Potter, attorney for Lao Family Community, who handles refugee cases. From there it could be another several months before refugees could leave for the United States, she said.

She and other Twin Cities refugee case workers said they don't know how many would end up in Minnesota or when they would come. But many Cambodians living here have petitioned and waited for their relatives for years.

Hong is among them. Like many of the 6,399 Cambodians in Minnesota, she also carries a horror story from her past.

Lang Hong

Communist soldiers killed her father when she was 10. Two years later she was separated from her mother, who died in 1978.

In 1979 Hong made it to the refugee camps in Thailand alone, without any of her five siblings. She came to Minnesota nearly six years ago.

Now she has two brothers in France, two sisters in refugee camps and a sister in Kampuchea, formerly Cambodia.

Until two years ago she thought her sisters, now 27 and 15, were dead, she said. "I never heard anything," Hong said Saturday night.

Every day after working as an assembly worker at Control Data, she heads for the mailbox at home.

Thursday the long-awaited news came. "I wish they could come (by) Christmas," she said. "Then we can open all the gifts. That would be so good."

Minneapolis Star and Tribune
December, 1987

DOCUMENT #19

Star Tribune/Tuesday/February 9/1988

Thailand says it will turn back 'illegal' refugees from neighboring states

Los Angeles Times

Bangkok, Thailand
The Thai government will turn back all future "illegal" refugees from its Communist-ruled neighbor states, Interior Minister Prachuab Suntharangkul said Monday.

Proclaiming what Radio Thailand termed a "prevent-and-deter action against all illegal refugees," Prachuab, Thailand's top law enforcement official, warned foreign governments not to interfere with Thai policy. He appeared to direct his remarks at the United States.

Like the United States, Prachuab said, Thailand prevents illegal immigrants from crossing its borders. He insisted that the Thais will treat humanely those refugees already in Thailand, and will try to help them find sanctuary in other countries. However, most Indochinese in Thai camps have been designated by the Thais as displaced persons, ineligible for resettlement abroad. And, according to Prachuab, no more outsiders will be allowed in unless they meet the international test of a refugee: a person fleeing persecution.

The vast majority of Indochinese held in Thai border camps are Laotians and Kampucheans, but a renewed tide of Vietnamese "boat people" triggered Prachuab's comments over Radio Thailand.

The subject is particularly sensitive because a number of Thai officials have been implicated in a smuggling operation involving boat people and contraband. The governor of Trat, a coastal province on the Kampuchean border, has been replaced. Twenty-five other officials of the province will be replaced, according to the press reports.

The number of Vietnamese reaching Thailand by sea has tripled in the past year, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, which oversees the operation of many of the camps. Refugee officials say that the increase was spurred by improved Thai policing of pirate attacks on refugee boats and by a dispute, now resolved, that reduced the flow of immigrants from Vietnam to the West, primarily to the United States, under the U.N.-sponsored Orderly Departure Program.

But the key factor in increased boat arrivals has been the development of a refugee pipeline from Vietnam, through Kampuchea to Thailand. Payoffs are made to officials along the way, according to refugee accounts. The refugees travel by land to the Kampuchean port of Kampong Som, then by sea to the Thai beaches east of the city of Trat, a far safer sea journey than the run from Vietnam across the gulf to southern Thailand.